



TITLE:

# Morphophonemic processes of words borrowed from Indo-Aryan languages to Bodo

AUTHOR(S):

Brahma, Bihung

---

CITATION:

Brahma, Bihung. Morphophonemic processes of words borrowed from Indo-Aryan languages to Bodo. Proceedings of the 51st International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics 2018: 9.

ISSUE DATE:

2018-09

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/235264>

RIGHT:

# MORPHOPHONEMIC PROCESSES OF WORDS BORROWED FROM INDO-ARYAN LANGUAGES IN BODO

Mr. Bihung Brahma  
Central Institute of Technology, Kokrajhar  
BTC, Assam, India  
[b.brahma@cit.ac.in](mailto:b.brahma@cit.ac.in)

**Introduction:** Bodo is a Tibeto-Burman Language of the Bodo-Garo Group. It is mainly spoken in Assam and is included as one of the Eight Scheduled Indian Languages. Besides Assam it is spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and West Bengal states of India. Outside India some speakers are found in Nepal (as Meche Language) and in Bangladesh. Bodo language is more similar with Kok-Borok Language of Tripura State and Dimasa of North Cachar Hills of Assam. The 2011 census of India estimates 1.5 million Bodo speakers. Bodo has at least four dialects as described in (Bhattacharya 1977) which are divided based on the map of Assam as North-West, South-West, North-Central and South. The Kokrajhar variety is considered to be standard by many speakers and writers. Presently Kokrajhar is the headquarter of Bodoland Territorial Council(BTC) and the speakers of this variety are found in its neighbouring District Bongaigaon and newly created district under BTC called Chirang. But in some part of Chirang District itself there is an interesting dialect spoken by good number of speakers which is similar to Bodo dialect of West Bengal and Nepal. As per as dialects of the language is concerned all the dialects are mutually intelligible and speakers don't look from status point of view.

Being one of the important languages of Tibeto-Burmese family of India, Bodo has made tremendous development in the last few decades. The Boro-Garo group belongs to the greater Boro-Konyak-Jingphaw sub branch of Tibeto-Burman family and consists of at least eleven languages: Bodo, Garo, Rabha, Tiwa, Dimasa, Kokborok, Atong, Wanang, Moran and Koch (Wood, 2008). However, as far as the present population of Bodo speakers are concerned it is assimilated with other Indo-Aryan Language groups such as Assamese, Bengali and Hindi speakers a lot and with English too at many extend. So, in this paper an attempt has been made to look at the changes in the borrowed words from IA roots which are used and nativized with some changes at the level of phonology and morphology.

### **Bodo Consonants:**

The native consonant inventory is relatively simple, with two series of stops at three positions, and three fricative/affricates(DeLancey,2010):

p	t	k
b	d	g
	z	
	s	h
m	n	ɲ
	l	r

Bodo consonant voiceless stops are all aspirated whereas IA consonant stops are both aspirated and unaspirated. On the other hand, voiced stops are all unaspirated in Bodo but IA languages do have both the aspirated and unaspirated forms.

### **Vowels and diphthongs:**

There are six vowel phonemes and eight diphthongs. The vowels are:

i		u
e	ɯ	o
	a	

/ɯ/, as the symbol implies, is pronounced somewhat higher and farther back than the central position represented on the chart.

/i e a o/ all occur with a back rounded offglide, which can be represented as /u/: /iu/, /eu/, /au/, and /ou/. /a w o u/ occur in diphthongs with a high front offglide: /ai/, /wi/, /oi/, and /ui/ (DeLancey,2010).

### **Morphophonemic Processes of Borrowed Words from IA Languages:**

Unlike other Indo-Aryan (IA) languages the Bodo phonology is quite simple. So, naturally the Bodo phonological characters influence many loan words from Assamese, Bengali or Hindi. The explanation of the morphophonemic processes or changes of the borrowed words from Indo-Aryan into Bodo is the main focus of this paper.

The voiced aspirated stops borrowed from IA origin are conformed to corresponding voiced unaspirated stops in Bodo (Table 1).

Table 1: List of IA words with voiced aspirated stops changed to unaspirated stops in Bodo

<b>IA words</b>	<b>Bodo</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
b <sup>h</sup> ol	bohol	gourd sp.
b <sup>h</sup> ut	buhut	ghost
b <sup>h</sup> azi	bahaja	fry
d <sup>h</sup> atu	dahatu	metal
d <sup>h</sup> ar	dahar	loan, debt
g <sup>h</sup> orial	guuler	crocodile

Similarly, words having voiceless unaspirated stops borrowed from IA origin are often nativized and changed to corresponding voiceless aspirated stops in Bodo (Table 2).

Table 2: List of IA words with voiceless stops changed to aspirated stops in Bodo

<b>IA words</b>	<b>Bodo</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
pap	p <sup>h</sup> ap	sin
pan	p <sup>h</sup> at <sup>h</sup> ui	betel leaf

teteli	t <sup>h</sup> int <sup>h</sup> laŋ	tamarind
toka	t <sup>h</sup> ak <sup>h</sup> a	money
kɔmɔla	k <sup>h</sup> omla	orange
kɔdal	k <sup>h</sup> odal	spade
kasɔ	k <sup>h</sup> aseo	tortoise

On the other hand, the voiced aspirated /d<sup>h</sup>/ and /g<sup>h</sup>/ are changed to corresponding unaspirated /d/ and /g/ since the aspirated /d<sup>h</sup>/ and /g<sup>h</sup>/ simply do not exist in the Bodo consonant inventory (Table3).

Table 3: List of words with aspirated velar stops changed to unaspirated velar stops in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning
d <sup>h</sup> ɔrmɔ	duhuurum	religion
d <sup>h</sup> ɔni	duuni	rich
g <sup>h</sup> ɔra	gorai	horse
g <sup>h</sup> ɔnta	gont <sup>h</sup> a	hour
g <sup>h</sup> ɔri	Guri/gwri	watch
xad <sup>h</sup> u	sadu	sage
s <sup>h</sup> radd <sup>h</sup> a	saradu	post funeral ceremony
pakg <sup>h</sup> ɔr	p <sup>h</sup> akgor	kitchen

Monosyllabic words of IA origin are often changed to disyllabic and disyllabic to trisyllabic words in Bodo. This is often done either through vowel modification or vowel insertion (Table 4).

Table 4: List of IA mono-/di-syllabic words changed to di-/tri-syllabic words in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning
b <sup>h</sup> ol	bohol	gourd sp.
b <sup>h</sup> ut	buhut	ghost
b <sup>h</sup> azi	bahaza	fry
d <sup>h</sup> ar	dahar	current

d <sup>h</sup> al	dahal	armour
d <sup>h</sup> ormo	duh <sup>h</sup> urum	religion
doŋ	dongo	canal
dal	dali	pulses
kam	k <sup>h</sup> amani	work
sah	saha	tea

Bodo consonants lack affricates, which are common in Bengali and Hindi. So, the affricate /tʃ/ is simply changed to alveolar voiceless fricative /s/ in Bodo. Similarly, post-alveoplar /ʃ/ is also changed to /s/ as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: List of IA words with /tʃ/ and /ʃ/ changed to /s/ in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning
tʃai	saha	tea
tʃol	suuli	be of use
ʃanti	sant <sup>h</sup> i	happy, comfortable
k <sup>h</sup> itʃiŋi	k <sup>h</sup> isri	hotchpotch

Assamese mono/disyllabic words having /o/ vowel sounds are changed to /o/ and /u/ in Bodo as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: List of IA words with vowel /o/ changed to /o/ and /u/ in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning
kodal	k <sup>h</sup> odal	spade
mona	mona	bag
golam	golam	slave
g <sup>h</sup> ora	gorai	horse
kumora	k <sup>h</sup> umbra	gourd sp.

Assamese words having /ɔ/ and /u/ are customized to /ʊ/ and /u/ in Bodo as exemplified in Table 7 below.

Table 7: List of IA words with vowel /ɔ/ and /u/ changed to /ʊ/ and /u/ in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning
jɔnmɔ	jʊnuʊm	birth
pɔt <sup>h</sup> ar	p <sup>h</sup> ʊt <sup>h</sup> ar	field
issɔr	isʊr	god
kɔt <sup>h</sup> a	k <sup>h</sup> ʊt <sup>h</sup> a	speech, word
gɔzal	gazuʊl	pin, nail
k <sup>h</sup> ub	k <sup>h</sup> uʊb	verymuch
xɔtru	sut <sup>h</sup> ur	enemy

IA words having /ɔi/ diphthongs are changed to /ui/ in Bodo (Table 8).

Table 8: List of IA words with diphthongs/ɔi/ changed to /ui/ in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning
dɔi	dʊi	butter
pɔisa	p <sup>h</sup> ʊisa	coin/rupee
mɔi	mʊi	cultivation tool
mɔina	mʊina	bird
sɔjtɔ	sʊit <sup>h</sup> ʊ	truth

Another interesting feature of morphophonemic change is found in the final syllable with vowel /a/ changing into /ai/. It may be due to verb formation strategy of Bodo where it involves addition of /ai/ final syllable as one of the strategies. However, it is possible with other word classes also as seen in Table 9.

Table 9: List of IA words ending with /a/ changed to /ai/ in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning	Word Class
pɔrha	phorai	read	verb
bɔna	banai	make	verb

th <sup>h</sup> oga	thogai	cheat	verb
doba	dabai	press downward	verb
sola	salai	ride, drive	verb
buza	buzai	teach	verb

## Conclusion

Bodo language is growing day by day as one of the most promising Modern Indian Languages of the Tibeto-Burman root in India. In the process of its development and due to intense contact with neighbouring IA languages, consciously or unconsciously it has borrowed and adapted the patterns and models of IA languages. It can be said as borrowing consciously because elderly generations from the communities were educated through Assamese and Bengali Medium. And Bodos have shared traditions, culture, religion (some) with the Aryan groups, which naturally demand many terms, and terminologies, which are not immediately available in the language. As per as Bodo is concerned the influence is seen more in morphological and phonological level and to some extent at sentence level also. The vowel /u/ is the easiest and most frequently used vowel in Bodo phonology which is very uncommon in the IA languages. So in the morphophonemic changes the vowel 'u' and diphthong 'ui' are used very regularly. It creates a good number of vowel-harmony also. So, in the case of loan words the native speakers tend to modify them according to the pattern and structure of Bodo morpho-phonology. Some of the morphophonemic processes are: (1) at the syllable structure with vowel harmony while transforming aspirated to unaspirated forms, (2) the affricate /tʃ/ to /s/, (3) the vowel 'o' sound of Assamese is changed to 'o' vowel sounds, (4) diphthong 'oi' of Assamese roots are changed to typical Bodo diphthong 'ui', (5) the verb roots and some word-final syllables with 'a' vowel are changed to 'ai' to suit the Bodo phonological patterns.



References:

Basumatary, P. (2017). *Verbal semantics in a Tibeto-Burman Language: The Bodo Verb*. Peter Lang, Oxford, U.K.

Basumatary, P.C. (2005). *An Introduction to Bodo Language*. Assam, India: Mittal Publications.

Bhattacharya, P.C. (1977). *A Descriptive Analysis of Boro Language*. Guwahati, Assam, India: Gauhati University Press.

Bradely, D. (1997). *Tibeto-Burman languages and classification*. Canberra.

DeLancey, S. et al (In preparation). *A grammar of spoken Boro*. Kokrajhar, India.

Thurgod, G (2003). *Sino-Tibetan Languages*. (1st Ed.) London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Wood, D.C. (2008). *An Initial Reconstruction of Proto-Boro-Garo*. M.A. Dissertation, University of Oregon, U.S.A.